Revealed: the secret to a family-friendly, stress-free summer holiday!

Monday 4 June, 2018

This summer, Fantastic for Families is heading for the great outdoors…

The summer holidays are fast-approaching, and so, too, is the annual dilemma of what to do with the kids. But, fear not! Fantastic for Families is here to help, with a summer of activities guaranteed to please not just the kids, but the rest of the family, too.

Fantastic for Families, (which is delivered by the Family Arts Campaign; an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation) aims to widen the family-friendly arts and culture offer to as many people as possible. Families can find out about events near them on the website **www.fantasticforfamilies.com**

Anna Dever, who manages the campaign, says:

“We know that when families can attend the theatre, galleries and museums *together*, it strengthens those familial bonds. Our aim is to work with organisations across the country so that family members from 8 months old to 80 years old can enjoy art, culture and entertainment together and can share a creative experience.”

This summer, Fantastic for Families is working with over 300 organisations across the UK on their summer theme – The Great Outdoors.

Studies show that spending time outdoors not only has several health benefits but has a significant impact on helping families to bond. Arts and culture can play a part in that.

Jack Gelsthorpe, Learning Researcher at the Natural History Museum, agrees:

“At the Natural History Museum, a lot of our work focuses on connecting our visitors to the natural world. There are so many benefits associated with affording people access to nature, especially in urban areas, but one of the main benefits, for families, is the social element; by doing things together as a family, you are encouraging conversation and breaking down generational barriers, and that can only be seen as a huge positive. Nature is so important to society and, if we want people to protect it, then we need to engage them in it.”

As well as strengthening familial bonds, exploring the great outdoors has also been proven to have a positive effect on a person’s health and wellbeing. According to a report* by The Wildlife Trusts, daily contact with nature is linked to better health, reduced levels of chronic stress, reductions in obesity, and even improved concentration.

Dominic Higgins, Nature and Wellbeing Manager at The Wildlife Trusts, says:

“A core part of my role at The Wildlife Trusts is to bring people closer to nature. Contact with nature plays a huge role in both preventing and treating illness, in particular, mental health. Nature is a great leveller, and it’s accessible to everybody. There has been a huge growth in activities that are targeted towards helping people to achieve sound health and wellbeing – both at The Wildlife Trusts and through organisations, such as Fantastic for Families. There are ways in which you can live differently, make contact with nature, and feel happier and healthier in the process. The intergenerational contact, associated with getting involved in nature-focused activities, is an essential part of improving the health and wellbeing of the whole family.”

Families across the UK can find great arts and culture activities on their doorstep and beyond by visiting www.fantasticforfamilies.com. For instance, families can head to Headstone Manor and Museum in Harrow on 6th August for the renowned Immersion Theatre’s spin on J M Barrie classic, *Peter Pan*. This outdoor performance features music, audience interaction and a hilarious script – perfect for the full family.

In Lancaster, Homegrown Walkabout Theatre’s *Three Musketeers* are taking over Williamson Park from 3rd July to 18th August for a swashbuckling adventure. Families are encouraged to go behind the scenes of the park show in order to get an inside look at the rehearsal process with **Secrets of the Stage** on 13th

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June at 6pm. This hour-long experience offers parents and children alike the opportunity to ask questions about how the show was made.

Catch *In The Night Garden Live* in Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, in its own purpose-built, family-friendly Showdome. These intimate performances, running from 7th to 22nd July, feature just thirteen rows of seats, promising every audience member a fantastic view and a day to remember.

Meanwhile on the 28th July, Z Arts in Manchester are bringing nature indoors with *Climb That Tree*. Award-winning songwriter and musician David Gibb will take the audience on a musical journey through his imagination, featuring bears in cupboards, wolves in corridors and trips to the moon.

For even more ideas on how to spend time together as a family this summer, outdoors or in, visit the Fantastic for Families website www.fantasticforfamilies.com where visitors can find thousands of events across the country for all ages.

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A selection of the best family-friendly nature-themed events

London

Peter Pan, Harrow Arts Centre, 171 Uxbridge Road, Hatch End, Middlesex, HA5 4EA

https://harrowarts.com/events/peter-pan-outdoor-theatre/?spektrix_bounce=true

6th August 2018, from £10, ages 3 and up

Immersion Theatre invite you to soar away to Neverland as they proudly bring their trademark energy to their most magical musical to date, Peter Pan, to the beautiful Manor House garden at Headstone Manor and Museum.

Tales from the Thousand and One Nights, Chickenshed Theatre, Chase Side, Southgate, London, N14 4PE

https://www.chickenshed.org.uk/Event/thousand-and-one-nights?spektrix_bounce=true

21st July to 4th August 2018, from £7, ages 3 to 7

A magic carpet of a show! Experience tales of wonder and magic, as words of imagination written in gold unfurl and fly before your very eyes

A Monster Calls, The Old Vic, The Cut, London, SE1 8NB
https://www.oldvictheatre.com/whats-on/2018/a-monster-calls

7th July to 25th August 2018, from £12, ages 10 and up

Stories are wild creatures, the monster said. When you let them loose, who knows what havoc they might wreak?

The Everywhere Bear, Polka Theatre, 240 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1SB

https://polkatheatre.com/event/everywherebear/

6h July to 26h August 2018, from £9, ages 3-6

The Everywhere Bear has a wonderful time with the children in Class One, but one day he gets more than he bargained for when he falls unnoticed from a backpack and embarks on his own big adventure!

The Virtual Orchestra, Riverside Square, Bedford, MK40 1NY

https://www.philharmonia.co.uk/the_virtual_orchestra/booking

7th to 15th *July 2018, from £3, ages 0 to 16*

Led by music specialists, these friendly bespoke sessions filled with fun hands-on activities for all ages will guide you and your family through a symphony orchestra.

North

Climb That Tree, Z-arts, 335 Stretford Road, Hulme, Manchester, M15 5ZA

https://www.z-arts.org/events/climb-that-tree/

28th July 2018, from £1, ages 3 and up

Join award-winning songwriter and musician David Gibb on a musical journey through his hilarious and often surreal imagination, where bears live in the cupboard under the stairs, wolves are roaming the corridors at school, and trips to the moon are a regular occurrence.

Just So Festival, Rode Hall Estate, Scholar Green, Cheshire, ST7 3QT

http://www.justsofestival.org.uk

17th, 18th and 19th *August 2018, from £20, all ages*

Now in its 9th year, Just So is dedicated solely to children and their families, offering astonishing arts and unique experiences. An annual, intimate, weekend-long festival, Just So is an imaginative outdoor adventure like no other. Just So Festival is renowned as one of the top family festivals in the world and the best place to see the best new outdoor arts each year,.

Wales

Tiddler and Other Terrific Tales, Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Flintshire, CH7 1YA

https://www.theatrclwyd.com/en/whats-on/tiddler-and-other-terrific-tales/

27th *to 29th July 2018, from £5, ages 3 and up*

Under the sea, out on the farm and into the jungle, these terrific tales are woven together with live music, puppetry and a whole host of colourful characters from Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's best-loved titles: ***Tiddler, Monkey Puzzle, The Smartest Giant in Town*** *and* ***A Squash and a Squeeze****. Funky moves, toe tapping tunes and giggles are guaranteed!*

East Anglia

Susannah and the Sunflower, Norwich Puppet Theatre, St James, Whitefriars, Norwich, NR3 1TN

http://www.puppettheatre.co.uk/whats-on/puppetry/susannah-and-sunflower

18th August *2018, from £9, ages 3 and up*

Susannah loves flowers but why does nothing grow in her garden! Could it be that she is hopeless at gardening? Is she overrun by snails? or is there a bigger problem at large? Following in the footsteps of Jack and the Beanstalk, Susannah embarks on a fantastical shadow adventure… meeting a Giant, the Giant's chicken and Giant snails. Can she face the Giant and bring her garden back to life?

Midlands

In The Night Garden Live, Cannon Park, Russell Road, Birmingham, B13 8RD

https://www.nightgardenlive.com

7h to 22nd July 2018, from £12.50, all ages

Step into the magical world of In the Night Garden and see Igglepiggle, Upsy Daisy and Makka Pakka brought to life before your eyes with beautiful costumes, magical puppets, enchanting music and breathtaking projections.

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